DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 279 CS 511 345

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TITLE	Folktale Theatre. ArtsEdge Curricula, Lessons and Activities.
INSTITUTION	John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	National Endowment for the Arts (NFAH), Washington, DC.; MCI WorldCom, Arlington, VA.; Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	12p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teaching_materials/curricula/curricula.cfm?subject_id=LNA.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Characterization; Class Activities; *Classroom Techniques; Creative Activities; *Fairy Tales; Grade 5; Grade 6; Guidelines; Intermediate Grades; Lesson Plans; Scoring Rubrics; Student Educational Objectives; Teacher Developed Materials; *Theater Arts
IDENTIFIERS	National Arts Education Standards

ABSTRACT

Children can learn to express themselves through the performing arts in constructive ways. Theater, specifically, employs the use of all dimensions of learning. In this lesson, students will engage in basic theater techniques for creating a character through movement and voice. The lesson, lasting 5 class periods, introduces them to guidelines for being both an audience and a performer and is designed to have them become familiar with terminology and conventions used in the art of acting; students will also be introduced to the process of scripting a story by adapting a common fairy tale to perform as a drama, linking literature and theater. The lesson offers an overview; suggests length and grade level; lists subjects and subtopics; cites dimensions of learning and intelligences being addressed; notes equipment and materials needed; lists teacher resources; and addresses National Standards for Arts Education. It identifies instructional objectives and strategies; provides a 3-part, detailed instructional plan; and suggests assessment activities. Attached is a rubric for "Folktale Theater" and a relevant vocabulary. (NKA)

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Curricula, Lessons and Activities

Folktale Theatre

Resource Type: lesson

Length: 5 class periods

Grade: 5,6

Subjects: Language Arts, Performing Arts

Subtopics: English, Literature, Social: Multicultural, Stagecraft, Theater

Intelligences Being Addressed:

- Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence
- Interpersonal Intelligence
- Intrapersonal Intelligence
- Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence
- Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence
- Visual/Spatial Intelligence

Dimensions of Learning:

- Acquisition and integration of knowledge
- Attitudes and perceptions about learning
- Extension and refinement of knowledge
- Meaningful use of knowledge
- Productive habits of the mind

Overview: Children can learn to express themselves through the performing arts in constructive ways. Theatre, specifically employs the use of

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all dimensions of learning. In this lesson, students will engage in basic theatre techniques for creating a character through movement and voice. They will be introduced to guidelines for being both an audience and a performer and will become familiar with terminology and conventions used in the art of acting. Students will also be introduced to the process of scripting a story by adapting a common fairy tale to perform as a drama, linking literature and theatre.

Equipment:

- Computer Mac or PC with Internet access

Media & Materials:

Printouts: This lesson has printouts. They are referenced in the "Student Supplies" or "Other Materials" sections below.

Student Supplies:

- Props, costumes, and materials for acting out the fairy tale students create

Other Materials:

- Copies of folk tales from various cultures
- Lined paper
- Pencils
- "Rubric for Folktale Theatre" handout
- "Vocabulary" handout

Related Textbooks: None

Teacher Internet Resources:

Lesson and Extension Specific Resources:

- **Creative Drama**
  http://www.lisd.net/schools/degan/creative%20drama.htm

  Degan Elementary School in Texas shares ideas about how creative drama can be used effectively in elementary

education. The site includes learning objectives for each grade level, suggested material, and subject-sensitive ideas.

- **Folktale Links**
  http://www.muw.edu/~kdunk/folk.html

  This comprehensive list provides resources containing material regarding traditional and international folktales and fairy tales, including the Brothers Grimm, Cinderella, creation stories, and Scottish folktales.

General Internet Resources:

- **Irish Literature, Mythology, Folklore, and Drama**
  http://www.luminarium.org/mythology/ireland/

  This site provides an extensive directory of links related to Irish literature, including information about Irish history, mythology, periodicals, authors, and works.

- **Legends**
  http://www.legends.dm.net/

  This Web site gives access to primary source material and up-to-date scholarship information. It includes personal essays, extended reviews, historical surveys and thoughtful commentaries on legends of romance, adventure, and history.

- **Native American Lore Index Page**
  http://www.ilhawaii.net/~stony/loreindx.html

  Over 100 Native American folktales from several tribes across Turtle Island have been compiled on this resource.

National Standards for Arts Education:

- K-4 Dance Content Standard 1 : Identifying and demonstrating movement elements and skills in performing dance
- 5-8 Theatre Content Standard 1 : Script writing by the creation of improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage, imagination, literature, and history
- 5-8 Theatre Content Standard 2 : Acting by developing basic acting skills to portray characters who interact in

improvised and scripted scenes
- 5-8 Theatre Content Standard 4 : Directing by organizing rehearsals for improvised and scripted scenes
- 5-8 Theatre Content Standard 7 : Analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Click here for additional information on the National Standards for Arts Education

Other National Standards:

Source of Standards:

For more on the Standards in other subjects, please refer to the Mid-continent Regional Education Laboratory (McREL) website.

State Standards, if any:

To search the State Arts Standards, please visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will be able to demonstrate proper audience protocol.
   Goal: Artistic Perception.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of stage direction terminology and will be able to define a character through voice and movement.
   Goal: Creative Expression.
3. Students will perform short scenes in groups for the class.
   Goal: Creative Expression, Artistic Perception.
4. Students will reflect on their experience and be able to assess if basic ideals were addressed in terms of audience and performer.
   Goal: Aesthetic Valuing.
5. Students will create a drama from a story, converting prose to action and dialogue.
   Goal: Creative Expression.

Strategies:

- Direct instruction for varying group sizes
- Inquiry: questioning to generate learning

- Group Process: cooperative learning groups

Instructional Plan:

Part One *(Activity Sequence: 35 minutes)*

Introduction

Teacher will lead a discussion about drama as an art form, centering on the creation of character through voice and movement. Students will attend a local production as a class. Afterwards, they will discuss what they observed in terms of voice and movement. The teacher will list on the board their responses. The teacher will discuss what other things might help create character and mood, such as lighting, costumes, and staging.

Movement Activity

The signals for "start" and "stop" should be established. The teacher can clap, whistle, or use some other method to indicate those commands and use them when necessary. Students will understand that they must adhere strictly to the stop and start commands. Now that ground rules have been established, the activity can begin. Since students have seen examples of movements used in a live theatre performance to create character and mood, they will engage in these. In a silent activity, with no one talking except the teacher (an important rule!) the students will be asked to move about the room, careful to not bump into or touch anyone else.

The teacher will direct them by stating: "Everyone show me a sad young person. Now how about a sad old person. Now try a happy, but tired person." The teacher can make up his/her own combinations. The duration of each should only be a few seconds (10 or 15). Students should incorporate the movements that are listed on the board into their pantomime. The teacher will then divide the students into two groups. One group will be the audience and the other will perform. The teacher will remind students of proper audience behavior.

The teacher will then engage the performing group in the activity as above, but giving directives as he/she sees fit. For example, noting that "a worried person might wring their hands while frowning" would give students movements to enhance mood and character. The teacher should interact as much as possible, giving directives that are specific while fine-tuning the student

responses.

The groups then switch and the performing group is the audience. Always remind students of good audience behavior. Once both groups have performed the teacher will introduce the terminology of stage directions. These are upstage, downstage, center stage, stage left, and stage right. A short demonstration of each and a simple "map" on the board will assist students in understanding the concept.

Part Two *(Activity Sequence: 35 minutes)*

Introduction

Now that movement is established, the class will begin to work with dialogue and vocal aspects of creating mood and character. Rules must be established to explain that no yelling will be tolerated at this time. The teacher will remind the students of what they have written on the board from the last activity. They will repeat the exercise as before, this time adding dialogue and vocal quality to their movements as the teacher directs them.

Voice Activity

Students will be asked to find a partner as quickly as possible and start a dialogue with that person as a character other than himself or herself. The teacher will remind students that dialogue is both listening and responding. In short intervals (15 or 20 seconds or so) the teacher will keep the pace going by having students switch partners and characters several times, relying on the list for ideas or using their own.

Scenes

The students will be put into groups of 4 or 5 to develop their own short scene to perform for class. Brainstorm with the class some common fairy tales, like "The Three Little Pigs" or "The Ugly Duckling." Give each group 5 minutes to come up with a short scene that has a beginning, middle, and end based on one of the fairy tales. They will be expected to use the techniques they had been developing in the previous exercises.

The teacher will remind them to incorporate various movement, voice, staging and character interaction techniques in their scene. The teacher will announce when time is up and students will perform for each other. When participating as the audience,

students will be reminded that they are expected to pay attention and show appreciation at the end of each scene. Laughing at one another will not be tolerated, although if comedy is present laughter is certainly acceptable.

Part Three *(Activity Sequence: 65-75 minutes)*

Introduction

Students will now script a story from a book. As in the previous sequence, students should be in groups of 4 to 5. They can combine into larger groups—up to 10 if necessary—for a desired story. The teacher will introduce copies of several folk tales and each group will pick one of the stories to script. Once a story is adapted, the group can rehearse and perform the piece.

Scripting Activity

This activity should take approximately 25 minutes. The students begin by reading the stories in their groups out loud. Everyone in the group should have a turn to read. This will help them get a chance to hear the story, rather than just see it on paper. Once the story is read, they need to identify the elements of the story that would be in a dramatization, such as characters, place, and time. The teacher will move among the groups, assisting in whatever way necessary.

The students will assign parts and begin to build a drama based on the story. They will identify key elements in the story, such as dialogue or action, and script them.

Students need to record their story for a script. If it is apparent that a person's lines are too numerous to remember, then encourage them to solve that problem in whatever way is necessary. Splitting one character into two can sometimes take the pressure off one person, or students may want to create a role for a narrator or storyteller. This sort of character can be both 'in' and 'out' of the story.

The students need not worry about performing the lines verbatim from the story; they just need to get the point across. Characterization is the most important part of the scripting exercise. What the character says and does in the story are the clues to assist in acting like that person. Many folktales use animal characters, and movement is the key to physically defining

this sort of character, especially if the character does not speak.

Closure *(Activity Sequence: 65-75 minutes)*

Rehearsing & Performing

Once students have 'cast' their adaptation and have a 'working script,' they can begin to practice the drama. Give them ample time, but keep track; 35 minutes should be enough, but allow a little extra if they really need it. They will work more efficiently if given a deadline for when they will perform. Once the groups have been able to rehearse the play a couple of times, they will perform for the other groups. When performing remind them of good audience behavior. Performances should last about 5 or so minutes each, totaling 25–30 minutes.

Assessment:

In the final sequence, students will assess their work by engaging in a group discussion immediately following the scenes. They will talk about what they learned about acting, performing in general, and working in groups in this sort of collaboration. They will discuss areas where they could improve their scene work, in general, and character development, specifically.

Students will be asked to write a paragraph or two on the experience. This will include who they worked with, what their scene was about, and what character they played. The teacher will encourage them to write about their observations of the activity, what they learned, and what they liked or disliked about the activity. Students will turn in their observations. This part of the activity will be graded, so details and neatness are important.

Extensions: None

Teacher References:

Cook, Wayne. *Center Stage: A Curriculum for the Performing Arts.* Dale Seymour Publications. 1992.

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Review Date:

ARTSEDGENotes:

RUBRIC FOR FOLKTALE THEATRE

Outcome: Students will demonstrate working knowledge of basic theatrical practice.
Task: Students will script and perform their own short scenes in groups..

by Dawn McConnell

Skill	Novice	Advanced	Mastery
Knowledge of story and scripting.	Can Identify basic plot and character motivation.	Can identify dialogue and action, any subplots, the story climax. Script creation from literature.	Can create script based on personal story, creating plot, subplot, action and dialogue.
Use of voice and movement to create a character.	Student can mimic a character voice and demonstrate a character physicality	Student uses various voice and body techniques to create a variety of characters.	Looks to text for speech patterning or dialect of character and movement details.
Knowledge of conventions of staging.	Student can demonstrate basic stage direction: up, down, center, right, left, etc.	Student can freely discuss stage blocking in proper terminology for entrances, exits, etc.	Student can use countering, triangulation, and balance when planning and performing scene-work.
Rehearsal and performance.	Makes good use of rehearsal time, resulting in sound performance.	Strong use of rehearsal time to develop character relationships and sharp staging.	Keenly rehearsed, resulting in through-line, compelling staging and characters.

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Vocabulary

- ***Scripting***: The process of developing a story for performance by actors.
- ***Character***: The person, animal, or entity in a story, scene, or play with specific distinguishing physical, mental, and emotional attributes.
- ***Characterization***: Imitation of individual and distinctive traits of a character in a play to portray that character to an audience; creating a believable person for a story or dramatization by imitating the physical, social, and psychological behavior of that person.
- ***Stage Directions***:
  - UP is away from the audience.
  - DOWN is toward the audience.
  - CENTER is in the middle of the stage.
  - RIGHT is to the actor's right when facing the audience.
  - LEFT is to the actor's left when facing the audience.
- ***Movement***: Using one's body and its ability to move through space to effect character, time, and place.
- ***Dialogue***: The words spoken by the characters in a play.
- ***Scene***: A part of a play or short improvisation.
- ***Cast***: *(As a noun)*: The actors in the play. *(As a Verb)*: To give individuals certain parts in a play.
- ***Working Script***: An unfinished, unpublished, original script that is usable for purpose of the drama. Might be changed in the course of rehearsals.
- ***Pantomime: Acting without words; using the body to express an idea, an emotion, or a character.***

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